

Utah Health Care Workforce Program

Program Objective:

The purpose of the Utah Health Care Workforce Program is to assist in addressing the health professional shortages that may cause disparities in access to health care. The Utah Health Care Workforce Program assists in the recruitment and retention of health care professionals dedicated to serving communities that lack adequate access to primary health care.

Short Description and Background:

In FY 2002, the three (3) State funded programs were consolidated into one (1) new program under 26-46, Utah Code Annotated, entitled the Utah Health Care Workforce Program. The program assists in the recruitment and retention of health care professionals dedicated to serving communities that lack adequate access to primary health care. Emphasizing the interdisciplinary approach, the program was created to represent primary health care professionals of many disciplines, including dentists, physicians, physician assistants, licensed practical nurses through advanced practice nurses, clinical psychologists, licensed clinical social workers, licensed professional counselors, and marriage and family therapists. Health professionals retained through this program must complete a minimum two (2) year service obligation.

Program Activities and Accomplishments:

Since 1990 the program has assisted in the placement of 276 health care professionals, including 5 dentists, 9 mental health therapists, 168 nurses, 67 physicians, and 17 physician assistants. Twenty (20) rural counties and three (3) urban counties have been served by the placement of these health care professionals. All award recipients agreed to serve a minimum two (2) year service obligation, with the hopes that they will remain and continue to serve medically underserved populations in Utah communities upon completion of their service obligation.

Fiscal Implications:

Primary care services can best prevent illness, or detect and treat it early when visits occur regularly over time. Ongoing funding for the Utah Health Care Workforce Program is a mechanism to support a reliable primary care safety net in Utah. Ongoing funding allows for the continued recruitment of health care professionals that replace retiring or exiting health care professionals. The Utah Health Care Workforce Program impacts Utah rural and medically underserved communities that have a difficult time recruiting and retaining health care professionals.

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